



The Bethel Courier.

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Bethel Historical Society

A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF MASON STREET by Ernest Perkins

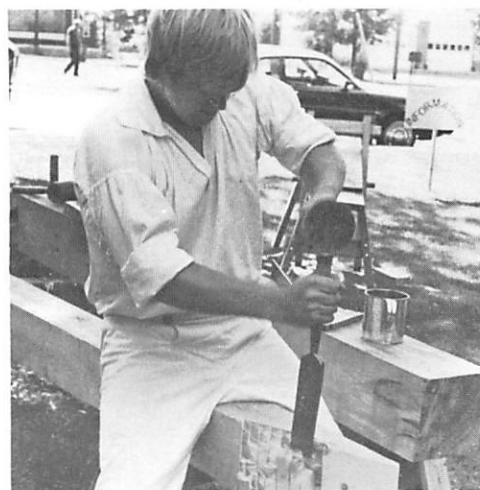
Since it passes by his home, Mason Street was named in honor of Dr. Moses Mason (1789-1866) one of Bethel's most prominent citizens in the nineteenth century. The street was approved at a town meeting on March 3, 1890, having been laid out by the County Commissioners on October 22, 1889 and later approved at their meeting on December 1 of that year.

Beginning at the Dr. Mason House end of the street, the first house on the right is that of Society life members Frederick and Mina McMillin. It was built in 1905 for Daniel Straw Hastings (1840-1925), civil engineer and prominent citizen, who lived in the large house adjoining the property on Broad Street, now owned by his grandson Edward H. Hastings. Daniel Hastings rented the property but upon his death in 1925 title passed to his daughter Edith. On November 16, 1925 Edith Hastings sold the property to George Harlow (1876-1950) who lived there for many years. From the Harlow estate the property was sold to Delwin Long in 1959. Long sold it in 1963 to Harold and Lillian Young. After his wife's death, Harold Young sold it to Craig Davis in 1977. The McMillins purchased the property in 1978 and have spent much time renovating the premises.

The next house, now owned by Keith Durgin, was built by Augustus C. Farwell who paid \$100 for the lot. He sold it to Wallace Clark in 1912. Clark lived here for many years. A 1933 advertisement in the Bethel Citizen featured Clark selling Chinchilla rabbits. Homer Hamlin purchased the property from Clark in 1953 and later that year sold it to Ernest Perkins, then an employee of Van Telephone and Telegraph Company. Perkins sold it to Keith Durgin, a carpenter, in 1981. Durgin has removed the barn and converted the premises to an apartment building.

On the opposite side of the street past the former Bethel Inn Garages which were discussed in an earlier Courier article on Spring Street (Spring, 1983) is the home of Blake and Rachael MacKay. This house was built in 1948 by Stanley Davis and sold to Superintendent of Schools Donald M. Christie in 1954. Christie sold it to the MacKays in 1960.

There are three other homes on this side of the street. Next to the MacKay's is the Methodist Parsonage built by H.I. Bean (1871-1952) in 1924 for \$3000. The lot was purchased from Clarence K. Fox (1872-1933) who lived next door on July 19, 1923 for \$300. Ministers who have lived here include Chester Oliver, W. R. Patterson, Roy Dalzell, Percy Clifford, Murchie Gordon, Mary Gibson, William Penner, David Hickland, Robert Carter, Dwight McMahon, Richard Hamilton, Donald Hess, Fred Bailey, George Stebbins, James Nason, Ronald McKinstry, Millett Cummings and Guy Downing, the present occupant.



Sudbury Canada Days held August 13-14. In the photo above Ed Kennett demonstrates joinery, one of the many old-time skills and crafts exhibited during this weekend. Other events included a children's parade, children's games, flower show, historical film series, art show, horseshoe and croquet tournaments, variety show, bean supper and old fashioned church services at the West Parish Congregational Church and the Middle Intervale Meeting House. Photo courtesy of Donald S. Brown.

Gardiner Gorman's house is the next one on this side of the street. It was built about 1886 by Abiel Chandler and was for several years a popular Bethel boarding house for summer visitors known as the Alpine House. Later the property passed to Eliphalet A. Blake who sold it to Fannie Bisbee Lovejoy in 1905. A decade later Mrs. Lovejoy sold the property to Clarence Fox who lived there until his death in 1933. Fox formed a partnership with Calvin Bisbee in 1892 and later (1923) one with Herbert I. Bean to form Bean and Fox (now Brown's Variety Store on Main Street) to sell groceries, bakery products, fresh vegetables and meats. He was once a vice-president of the Bethel National Bank and an assessor of the Village Corporation. Society member Emeline Heath, now living in Gilead, once boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Fox while attending Gould Academy in the 1920s. From the Fox estate this property was acquired by the Bethel Savings Bank which sold the premises to Fred Gorman in 1938. Upon Mr. Gorman's death in 1947 his son Gardiner inherited the property.

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**BETHEL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1984 CALENDARS
\$3.50 EACH**

Please add \$1 for each calendar to cover postage.

The former Grover house was once on the property of Bethel Inn on Mill Hill below the present home of Society Secretary Mary C. Keniston. It was used for many years as quarters for the chauffeurs at the Inn. In the late 1930s the building was purchased by Abner Kimball (1881-1952) who had James Kerr move it from this site to land on Mason Street purchased from Euberto (1877-1964) and Mary Brown (1888-1967). James Spinney remodeled the interior. From Kimball it passed to Edward and Elizabeth Wheeler who sold it to Albert and Beatrice Grover in 1948. A veteran of World War I and a one-time commander of Mundt-Allen American Legion Post, Albert Grover was for many years a deputy with the Oxford County Sheriff's Department. His widow sold the property to Patricia Glidden this year.

Crossing the street and beginning at the other end of Mason Street, the first house is that of Society member Mary Valentine. It was built in the 1940s by James Croteau. He sold the property to Elmer Trask (1877-1960) in 1949. Trask's daughter Edith sold the premises to Alton and Sylvia Luxton in 1961. After Alton's death Mrs. Luxton sold the property to Society members Edward and Amy Kennett in 1979 who in turn sold it to Mary Valentine in 1982.

The next house is that of Kenneth and Betsy Paquette. It was built about 1920 by Will Garey (1875-1938). From his widow, Mary (1870-1949) it passed to Ross I. Knapp who sold to Richard S. Waldron Sr. (1915-1980) in 1950. Mr. Waldron and his wife Elsie (1914-1978) were among the founding members of the Bethel Historical Society. He was long associated with P. H. Chadbourne & Company. From the Waldron estate it was acquired by the Paquettes.

Next to this house is the present home of Society members Ernest and Betty Perkins. It was built about 1925 by Flora Aubin. The next owner was Cora S. Robertson (1891-1961) who sold it to Ray S. York (1891-1961) in 1938. From York the property was sold to Arthur C. Garber (1884-1969). Upon his death the house passed to his widow Rosa (1896-1980). After Mrs. Garber's death her daughter Ruth McKenna sold the property to Ernest and Betty Perkins.

Across Crescent Street is the home of Wendell and Carolyn Sweetser built about 1900 for Fannie Mason (1857-1928). From her, the property passed to F. Emma Robertson (1873-1965) and subsequently to Lawrence and Doris Lord. The Lords were part of a popular Bethel musical group that entertained audiences in the area for many years known as Lord's Orchestra. Following her husband's death in 1968, Doris Lord sold the premises to John C. Anderson in 1974. The Sweetsters purchased the property from Anderson in 1975.

Next is the home of John and Mary Jo Wheeler which was built about 1900 for Calvin Bisbee. It was sold to Fannie Bisbee Lovejoy in 1915 and from her title passed to Horace Annas. He willed the property to his adopted daughter Elsie Annas Poore in 1941. She sold the property in 1969 to Bronislawa Y. Noyi who in turn sold it to Eugene Kelly in 1974. The Wheelers purchased the premises this year.

Between the last house and the property of the Browns is that of Stephen and Sylvia Meserve Hoey. It was built in the 1950s by Frank Lowell for John and Alta Meserve who purchased the land from Elsie Poor in 1955. After their deaths, the property passed to the Hoeyes.

Peter and Denise Brown's house was built after 1903 by Stillman Littlehale (1837-1915) who purchased the land from Calvin Bisbee for \$275 in 1903. Stillman and wife Lucy (1845-1912) sold the property to Elmer Randall and Ethel Sanborn (1889-1975) in 1907 for \$1150. From them the property was sold in

1919 to Simeon Keddy. After Mr. Keddy's death, his son, Society member Royden sold the premises to Donald Walker in 1964. Walker sold it to David Salway in 1967. The next owner was Bruce Bordeau who acquired it in 1970 and sold it two years later to the Browns.

The last house before crossing Sanding Brook is that of Olie Morgan. This house was also built by Stillman Littlehale after 1900 who sold it to Silas Littlehale (1851-1941) in 1911. Stanley Wentzell (1893-1978) purchased the property for \$1500 in 1922 and sold it to Errold O. Donahue (1894-1963) in 1946. Mr. Donahue's widow Hilda sold the premises to Bethel Furniture Stock Company in 1968 from which it was purchased in 1979 by Olie Morgan.

From its earliest days Mason Street has enjoyed a reputation as a pleasant residential street. It is interesting to note that a large number of its residents have been associated with the Methodist Church. Several of its former residents were prominent in Bethel's economic, social and political life but many have simply worked at their jobs, raised their families and generally led quiet lives.

BOOK REVIEW

Brian Back, The Keewaydin Way, A Portrait: 1893-1983. Timagami, Ontario: Keewaydin Camp Ltd., 1983. 206 pp. \$18 paper.

To the casual observer, a history of Keewaydin Camp in Lake Timagami, Ontario may not seem related to the topic of western Maine history. But dozens of Bethel students and adults spent at least one summer at this camp where the late Gayle A. Foster was business manager for many years. Foster also was a teacher at Gould Academy for eighteen years (1942-1960) and during this time recruited Gould students and faculty for summers at Keewaydin.

Keewaydin was founded in 1893 in northern Maine but due to the desire for an even greater wilderness area for canoe tripping was moved by 1904 to Lake Timagami in eastern Ontario. This book describes the history of this well-known canoe trip camp under the leadership of Major Gunn and others. There were difficult periods and during World War II it looked like the camp might not survive at all. To the rescue came two wealthy businessmen who were familiar with the importance of what became known as the "Keewaydin experience" and established the Thomas-Jones Foundation. They selected a former Gould Academy faculty member as its director, Howard P. Chivers. Chivers provided a period of strong leadership and eventually purchased the camp from the Foundation. He was followed by the present owner/director Fred Reimers of Jackson, Mississippi.

Keewaydin attracted campers and staff from all over the United States but was particularly successful in reaching those in the major metropolitan areas of the northeast and midwest, especially those with elite private school connections. For Gould Academy students and faculty it was an opportunity to explore the Lake Timagami region in the company of people from many parts of the United States and Canada.

This book is well-written and profusely illustrated. It is highly selective in its treatment of people and events. Its emphasis on the early days and tripping lore while neglecting the later period make it a disappointment for those interested in the post World War II era. Nonetheless for anyone who spent summers at Keewaydin it will be of interest.

SRH

MEMORIES OF AN EARLIER ERA

PART II

by Marjorie Farwell Cummings

Editor's Note: The first part of Mrs. Cummings's reminiscences was published in the summer issue of the Courier. This second segment was written in 1982 when she was eighty five.

MORE CHANGES IN OUR GROWING UP FAMILY

On September 19, 1906 Cora was married at our home to Rev. Ralph A. Sherwood of Providence, Rhode Island. She had met him when he came as a student pastor to the Middle Intervale Church for two summers. Mr. and Mrs. Austin of Waterville, in whose home Cora had partly worked her board while attending Colby College, came for the wedding; also Dr. Wilson, the pastor of their church, came and performed the wedding ceremony. Previously Mr. and Mrs. Austin had wanted to adopt Cora, but our parents could not think of giving her away.

Rev. Sherwood's first pastorate after Divinity School was in Somersworth, New Hampshire and that is where they started their new home. So it was that the eldest of our large family had flown from the nest.

Eva and Wallace were attending Gould Academy and driving to and from school. My main memory at that time is the afternoon they came home to announce that they were coming down with the measles and anxiously asked if they could come in. Of course they could and did. That was the beginning of a long seige of illness, and I can look back and wonder how our mother ever got through it. The measles went through our entire family except Mama and Papa. I think now of the countless trips up and down the steep stairway caring for us, attending the wood stoves, and all the other things to be done. I remember how uncomfortable I was and Mama told me later there did not seem to be a spot I wasn't covered with measles. It is also the first time I recall of being sick; I was a baby when the chicken pox and whooping cough was brought home from school by the older children. Sara had the measles and was recovering well. Her employer at the factory urged her to get back to work as they said they needed her. She went against our parents' pleading. She had a relapse and went into tuberculosis (consumption, they called it then). Previously she had been told by her doctor she must give up her work as the lint from the plush material used in the cushions was affecting her lungs, but she was dedicated to her work and thought she couldn't give it up. There were no antibiotics then to fight the disease and she died in January 1907. She was a beautiful and loving daughter and sister and the family grief was great.

Not long afterward Mama was taken with lumbago and confined to her bed. She had faithfully cared for her children and now it was her turn to be cared for. In a matter of weeks she was up and about and taking over her busy life once more.

It was in the year of 1907 that we first had the telephone and the Rural Free Delivery. We could now call the doctor when needed and not have to drive the horse four miles to the village to ask him to come. There were four resident doctors in the town of Bethel at that time: Dr. Twaddle, Dr. Wight, Dr. Tibbetts and Dr. Gehring. It was the custom to make house calls when people were ill and the doctors carried a case of remedies that sufficed for the common ailments. They had nice driving horses, and when they had several calls to make in opposite directions, they would change horses between trips. The tele-

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

With winter coming on us again in rural Maine, one way to escape the drudgery of another season of snow and cold is to take up the "joy of history." While history may not have the elements of sensationalism and titillation allegedly found in reading about sex, it has many qualities of enduring fascination often overlooked because of the very common nature of historical materials.

Winter is a good time to browse through Lapham's History of Bethel again and discover some of the pieces previously missed, a genealogical connection not fully realized or thoroughly investigated. It could be the discovery of what influences and contacts neighboring towns and communities had upon one another.

The Society's 1984 calendar may also suggest possibilities for further research or inquiry. Photos of the "Steam Mill", the Bethel Chair Factory and William Rogers Chapman stir up questions in my mind that can be answered perhaps by reading old issues of the "Citizen" on microfilm which are available in the Eva Bean Research Room at the Moses Mason House. Other answers might be found in this room by searching through the more than one hundred manuscript boxes or by perusing the town history collection. Perhaps one's winter explorations will help recall something stored away in the family attic which might be of general interest and worth sharing at a Society meeting.

Anyway, here's to brightening up the coming winter months with a little "joy of history" along with the other pastimes that may be pursued.

Donald G. Bennett

NEW SOCIETY TRUSTEES

Persis Post was born in Naugatuck, Connecticut and spent her childhood in Waterbury, Connecticut and Wappinger Falls, New York. She earned her B.S. degree from Teachers College, Columbia University and did graduate work at Montclair (NJ) State College and the University of Vermont. Mrs. Post began her teaching career in a one room rural school but completed forty years in the profession at E.B. Taft School where she did demonstration teaching and supervised student teachers for the Department of Education at the University of Vermont in Burlington. A member of several professional organizations, she also has been active in church and Sunday School work as well as serving as a member of the school board for Mount Mansfield (VT) High School. Now retired and living in Newry, Maine with her husband, University of Vermont Professor Emeritus Archie T. Post, she is active in community and volunteer work. Her hobbies include reading, handcrafts and fishing. She has six grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Ruth White Wight was born in Searsport, Maine and graduated from the University of Maine at Orono in 1941 with a B.A. in English. She obtained a M.L.S. degree Southern Connecticut State College in 1970. From 1964 to 1982 she served as school librarian in Milford, Connecticut, retiring to Bethel in June, 1982. A widow, she is the mother of five children and grandmother of eleven. Active in community and volunteer work, she also is a member of a number of professional organizations and a life member of the Society. Her hobbies include reading and needlework.

phone made the community seem much closer together when one could call and chat with a neighbor. As I recall, there were twenty-four parties on our lines. With the coming of the RFD, our mailman deposited the mail in our mail box, which was at the junction of the roads. That was still one mile from home, but when school was keeping, we picked up the mail on our way home. These two services added a great deal to the quality of rural living.

In late summer of 1907, Cora came home to visit with her baby daughter Margaret. She also came in late 1908 with Margaret and little son Everett.

In November of 1908 sister Lena was married to Walter T. Wight and thus the next in line takes her leave of the family home.

Grace and I completed our elementary education in June 1910. We went to the Brick Building in the village to take the entrance examinations for High School. I had never been in the building before, and knew hardly anyone. I was truly frigid with fear in my unfamiliar surroundings. Although I was thirteen years old, I had always been one of the younger ones; there were always older ones to take responsibility. At about my age my oldest sister was driving to Bethel to attend Gould Academy, but I had never harnessed or driven a horse; I had never helped select my clothes or material to make them. In truth, in my closely guarded surroundings, I knew little of the facts of life. It had been arranged that Grace and I go to Keene, New Hampshire, where the Sherwoods were then living, stay with them and attend high school. We were to work part of our board by baby-sitting and helping around the house. Wallace was also leaving home; he went with us to Keene, then left for Dracut, Massachusetts, where he ran a milk delivery to Lowell for the Bryant Brothers dairy. The Bryant brothers were sons of our mother's oldest brother Benjamin. We spent our first Christmas away from home with Wallace and our Massachusetts relatives.

When the three of us left home, Eva also left to teach school. That left only the youngest at home, Robert, who was not quite twelve years old. Now, not only the older children were leaving, we were leaving also. I have to say that this was a very traumatic experience in my life. There was a lot of growing up to do in a hurry, but my big sister was kind and helpful. Grace and I came home at the end of the school year, and helped with the busy summer life on the farm; then returned in September for our second year of high school.

The following February Grace had an acute attack of appendicitis and was operated on. Mama came and when Grace was able, took her home. She did not go back again, but I continued on, coming home for summer vacations and graduating in June 1914. It was a pleasant surprise when I was told I had been chosen to deliver my graduation essay entitled "When the West Was Young." Papa and Mama came to attend my graduation in Keene City Hall.

I had previously had an interview at a business office and been accepted to start work the first of August. I came home with my parents for the intervening few weeks, then returned to start another phase of my life. So it was, I got back to the farm only two weeks of the year for the next three years. During that last year the Rev. Sherwood was called to the Salem Baptist Church in Massachusetts and the family had moved to Salem. I was boarding with a widow lady from our church who ran a boarding house not far from the parsonage. Although I was well taken care of, my parents thought of me as alone in the city without family. There was an opening in the office of the E.L. Tebbets Spool Company in Locke's Mills and my parents wanted me to apply

for it. I did and was accepted. Many of my Keene friends thought I was making a big mistake to make the change, but I can truly say I have never had any reason to regret it. I worked there for the next five years until my marriage, going home most weekends to spend time with my parents.

MAPLE SYRUP TIME

In the fall the sap in the trees goes down to the roots, the leaves fall, leaving the trees bare and looking lifeless. Nature has its way and when it is the right time, the sap starts to rise; in this area it is usually early in March, but it varies a little. Sunny days and frosty nights make for good sap weather.

We did not have a sugar house on our farm. This meant that each year an arch was built of brick just across the road that was large enough to support two large square sap pans and with a long firebox underneath. The bricks were stored during the year under the stairway that led to the barn. This was a project that even the quite young could be helpful in, carrying the bricks out for the arch to be built and at the end of the season carrying them back to the barn cellar.

The sap buckets were stored in the attic. The first ones I remember were the wooden buckets that do not stack so it meant many trips to the attic to bring them down the two flights of stairs. The buckets were washed and taken out on the porch to await being loaded on a horse-drawn sled and taken to the maple sugar orchard. Sometime later we had the metal sap pails that stacked up and the metal spiles. My earlier memory is of seeing my father and older brother whittle the spiles from soft wood and burning a hole through with a red hot wire for the sap to run through. A hole was bored in the tree, a spile tapped in and a bucket hung to catch the sap. Then for nearly every day of the season the sap was collected in a huge barrel that was placed on a horse-drawn sled, taken to the arch area and poured into the pans with a hot fire underneath. It takes about forty gallons of sap to make a gallon of syrup. It was an in-between season project that brought in some income for the small farmer, as well as providing syrup for the family use during the year. We looked forward to sugaring off time. About twice during the season we had what is called sheepskins on snow. Milk pans of snow would be brought into the house and the syrup boiled down to nearly the sugar stage, then the hot syrup dropped on the snow and eaten with a fork. When we had had our fill of that, we were given a small bowl of syrup to stir until it began to grain then pour into little molds for maple sugar to eat later. Papa used to get \$1.25 a gallon for the first runs which were always a little lighter in color and more delicate in flavor.

Later the farmers who made a big business of the project had equipment that consisted of pipelines that ran from the trees directly to the sugar house and had evaporator equipment for the boiling down which of course simplified and speeded up the process. However, I enjoy thinking about how it was done on our farm when I was a little girl.

THE FOUR SEASONS (Spring)

Each season brings its own activities on the farm. I have already written about maple syrup time. By the time this was over and equipment gathered and stored, it was time to finish working on the mountain size pile of wood to be drying for the next winter. Sometimes there would be a sawing machine around the neighborhood and one could hire the owner to saw the wood into stove wood length. Other times the sawing and splitting

would all be done by hand. A crosscut saw operated by two people would be used on the larger wood and a bucksaw on the smaller size.

When the weather got warm enough the sheep would have to be sheared, the wool washed and dried ready to go to Hanover to be carded into rolls for spinning. One of my older sisters used to make the all day trip to get this done. Mama spun and dyed all the yarn to be made into mittens, stockings, sweaters, et cetera for all the family. I have watched her spinning the rolls into yarn many times, but I never got to try to do it. When the spindle on the spinning wheel was full of yarn, it was wound onto a reel into skeins. Mostly she used commercial dyes for coloring, but I do remember she made a brown dye from acorns.

The manure had to be hauled out and spread on the fields for fertilizer, and the ground plowed and harrowed ready for planting. Papa had a small hot bed he prepared and planted first so we would have a few things earlier than the regular garden. He had a horse-drawn planter that had a sort of triangle shaped box, divided in the middle. It could be used for planting peas, beans, or corn. Whichever was being planted was put in one side of the box and fertilizer in the other side. There were slots in the bottom that worked back and forth to release the seeds and fertilizer as it was being drawn along. Potatoes were cut for seed and dropped alternately with fertilizer by hand. All the small seeds were planted by hand. Oats were thrown broadcast; when all or most of the family were at home Papa used to plant a small area of buckwheat. I remember the very sweet aroma when it was in blossom. After it was harvested, the seed was taken to the mill to be ground and used for pancakes.

My older brother must have been a tremendous help to Papa as he grew older and able to do so many of the farm jobs. He was very handy with tools, in doing things around the house as well as taking care of the farm machinery.

At our home the milking was done before breakfast. Mama and the older girls would have a hearty breakfast ready by the time Papa and Wallace had finished the milking and barn chores. Then the cows had to be driven over the road to our pasture. This was a chore the younger children soon learned to do with the help of the dog to keep them in the road. Then in late afternoon it would be time for us to go and bring them back to the barn. Mostly the cows would be at the bars waiting for us, but sometimes one or two would wander off and we would have to

hunt for them. Such cows had a cow bell strapped around their necks to help us in locating them. For other chores we could help with feeding the hens and chickens, gather eggs, fill the woodbox, make our beds, help with the dishes, set the table; there was no time to get bored with the many things to do on the farm.

THE FOUR SEASONS (Summer)

Summer was always a very busy time. After the planted seeds were well started it was time for the cultivating and hoeing. Papa liked to cultivate early in the morning when it was cool and he liked to have one of us ride the horse to guide him through the rows without stepping on the plants. There really were few chores that I minded doing, but I never did appreciate being awakened at four o'clock in the morning, dressing and riding astride the workhorse with a blanket over his back to cultivate the garden.

We picked a lot of berries. Besides the cultivated ones we also picked a lot of wild strawberries, blueberries and raspberries. The wild strawberries were a lengthy task in the evening as each

tiny berry must be hulled. It took about three quarters of an hour to hull a quart of them. They were put in special round boxes with a cover. A box of wild strawberries will go much farther in serving than a quart of cultivated ones. Papa got twenty-five cents a quart for the first ones. The other berries were much easier and quicker to take care of. Somewhere in between, the garden produce would have to be picked and put in the cool cellar so all would be ready for an early start to the village the next day.

Haying had to be done at the proper time and worked in along with the gardening. I can envision Papa running the mowing machine while Wallace used the hand scythe around rocks, trees and fences. When the grass had dried it was raked with a horserake into winrows, then forked into tumbles ready to be loaded and taken to the barn. Often someone went around with a big hand drag rake to gather up the scatterings in loading. The new-mown hay had a nice smell; it was fun to play in, too. It was gratifying to see the hay mows filled for another year.

For a few years in the early 1900's my father and his brother, Porter Farwell of East Bethel, hayed their father's farm after all the families had moved away. Some years part of our family would move over there for a week or so while they were haying. They would take one of our cows along to have for milk. Wallace would take the shortcut across to our place in late afternoon to help with the chores at home, and return when he had finished with the chores in the morning. It was interesting roaming about over the old house. I remember seeing a cord bed. I had never seen one before; it had a big rope strung back and forth through holes in the side pieces, and was topped with a cornhusk mattress. There were several beds and other pieces of furniture around and in the kitchen an old table and some chairs and a stove so Mama could cook the meals. The water came from a spring above the house and piped down to run into a tub outside the shed. Close to the back of the house was a row of red cherry trees that still bore fruit, and nearby an apple orchard; on a small knoll was a cranberry patch, and there were a lot of blueberry bushes around. I liked to watch the men unload a load of hay with the big hayfork, that was attached to big ropes and pulleys. Grace says she remembers she didn't like being called from picking blueberries to ride the horse outside as he pulled the big rope out that carried the hay to the scaffolds.

There were a few years, probably starting about 1906, we raised broilers for the Bethel Inn; it was called Prospect Inn at that time and was a much smaller building; later that building burned and a much larger Bethel Inn was built. This was before the time of mass production as we know it today and the broilers were considered a luxury. An incubator was purchased that accommodated about two hundred eggs. A kerosene lamp was used for heat to hatch the eggs. Each day for three weeks the trays of eggs were taken out and the eggs turned; then came the interesting time to peer through the glass and watch as the eggs cracked and the chicks were hatched. For a period of time the

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SOCIETY OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

Donald G. Bennett, President; Alden Kennett, Vice President; Mary C. Keniston, Secretary; Margaret Joy Tibbetts, Treasurer; Trustees: Catherine Newell, Ronald Snyder, Willard Wight, Persis Post, Ruth Wight.

young chicks had to be housed in controlled temperature, again using kerosene for heat. The buyers liked to have the broilers grown to dress about one and a half pounds. It really was a pretty ambitious project with our very limited equipment. Heretofore the setting hens had hatched a sufficient number of chicks to replenish the family flock. The mother hens took very good care of the chicks, hovering them under their wings to protect and keep them warm.

I would have to say Papa's great pride was in his garden. He studied the seed catalog for new things and variety. He had gooseberry bushes and red, white, and black currant bushes. In addition to the red raspberry, he had purple, black, and white; the latter were sort of pinkish when ripe. There was rhubarb in abundance and asparagus; a variety of grape vines and plum trees. His own favorite plum was the damson that he liked preserved in a heavy syrup. Today when I pay twenty-five cents for a single plum, I think of the times I have stood by my favorite red plum tree and eaten my fill. Papa used to transplant natural fruit apple trees and graft them with scions of good eating apples. He had varieties that I seldom hear about today, such as Bellflower, Blue-pear-main, Black apple, Russet, Greenings, Banana apple, Baldwin, and Northern Spy to name a few. In later years, I think it was after the family had left the farm, the gooseberry bushes and currant bushes were destroyed wherever they were found as it was thought they were a cause of the white pine blister rust.

The extra summer work provided income that was carried over for when there would not be as much coming in. Our father and mother were very hard-working people and conservative; they had to be with their large family. In recent years I have listened to interviews on television when one would be asked about their childhood. Often the answer would be like "I expect we were classed as poor, but we didn't know it; we had what we needed and never went hungry." So it was with us.

THE FOUR SEASONS (Fall)

The oats were cut when ripe and later threshed by a man with the equipment who made rounds to the farmers.

As the field beans matured in their pods, the vines were pulled and stacked in frames in the field. Later the stacks were hauled in and stood in the further end of the barn floor. When there was an opportunity the barn floor was cleared and swept and the bean vines spread around over the floor. There were implements called flails that were used to beat the vines to open and shell the beans. After it appeared the pods were about all shelled, the vines were raked off and the beans scooped up into containers and taken over to the entrance where the big barn door opened and shut with overhead pulleys and track. The beans were held high and poured from one container to another while a mild breeze would winnow the chaff from the beans. They were then put in bags to store away. In winter on a day the family were pretty much confined to the house, the big dining table would be cleared bare and a bag of the beans dumped in the middle of the table while whoever was at home would sit around with a pan in their lap and finish picking over the beans. What was needed for family use and for seed to plant was kept and the surplus sold to the village stores.

The field corn was cut on the stalks, tied in bunches and stacked in the field until it was time to gather it in the barn. If a farmer had a large quantity, he might have a husking bee and invite in the neighbors. The stacks of corn would be laid out down the center of the swept barn floor while the folks sat

around husking it. That was a time when romance might have a beginning among the young folks. Much ado was made when a red ear might show up. While husking a few husks would be left on the choice ears and put in a pile by themselves. These would be braided into traces and hung up for seed or some special use, while the other would be used for feed. When the husking bee was over, the huskers all gathered in the house where the ladies had been busy preparing an abundant meal.

Our family always made hulled corn in winter as we were all fond of it. They made the lye for this purpose from ashes. They also made hominy that I was very fond of, but I do not know how it was made. It was different from the packaged hominy I buy in the stores today. I think it was made from cracked corn.

Apples were picked and stored in barrels in the cellar. Cider apples were taken to the cider mill to make cider. This was enjoyed as a drink while still sweet. Some of the cider would be boiled down to a thick dark syrup and preserved in bottles or jars. It was a good addition to mincemeat and it also made a tasty drink when mixed with sugar and water. The haymakers liked it in summer. Then there was always a barrel to age for vinegar. Another chore for the young children was stringing apples to dry. We had a gadget that fastened onto the edge of the table. It had a spindle on which we put the apple, turned a small crank and it peeled the apple. When they were quartered and cored we strung them on twine string; they were hung on nails behind the kitchen stove to dry. The dried apples were used for pies and they also made good sauce when baked in the beanpot and sugar or molasses added.

The potatoes were dug and stored in bins in the cellar; root vegetables were pulled and stored and the cabbage picked.

Storm windows were brought from storage, washed and put on. It was a busy time trying to get everything ready for winter.

THE FOUR SEASONS (Winter)

With the present supply of wood all tiered in the woodshed for use, it was time once more to begin preparing for the year ahead. In addition to the family needs some cordwood might be cut to sell in the village, and also pulpwood to be sold to the paper company. The pulpwood would be hauled down and piled near the riverbank where it would be scaled by the paper company. After the ice had gone from the river in the spring, the owner would throw the pulp into the river, and the current would take it to Rumford. The river drivers followed along after with their long poles with sharp picks on the ends to pick off the bank any that got left. The river drivers were very clever at riding the lumber in the river. Today the lumber is all trucked in.

The people living on the cross roads usually attended to plowing the snow on their road. This was done by putting a board across the front of a logging sled. Large drifts had to be shovelled by hand. I believe their work was or could be credited to their taxes.

Winter was a time for spinning and knitting the needs of the family. How fast those steel needles would go! I can remember seeing a pair of men's long knit underpants - - what a chore that must have been to knit them. The ones worn in my memory were store bought long sleeved shirts and long legged pants. My father wore long felt boots for winter and heavy rubbers to wear over them for outside wear. The women and children wore long underwear and high shoes; rubbers were worn over them for outside wear. The first shoes I remember were buttoned, then later the lace shoes came into style. It was not until the generation of my children that we had snowsuits and various kinds of footwear

EDITOR'S CORNER

Since the last issue of the Courier an act to exempt historical societies and museums from the state sales tax has become law and will take effect on January 1, 1984. Sponsored by Oxford County Senator Donald Twitchell, supported by key members of the Maine legislature and endorsed by Governor Brennan, this act will mean much to Maine's historical community as we struggle to preserve and interpret our heritage for future generations. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Governor and the Maine Legislature for this boost to Maine's historical societies and museums.

SRH

for outside wear. That was a very sensible improvement for winter wear.

Winter was also the time most of the butchering was done. I never liked that and stayed as far away as possible. The pork hams and bacon were smoked, the portion for salt pork was put in brine, hogshead cheese was made, also sausage in bags; lard rendered and some meat hung to freeze. There was beef and lamb also, but it was not all done at one time.

Kerosene lamps and lanterns were for light. That was one of the morning tasks — filling them, adjusting the wicks and washing the chimneys.

There was not much winter social life in country living as I knew it. A family pretty much provided their own entertainment. A card game of Flinch was often played in the evening. The family sat around the dining table; as the younger ones were old enough they joined in. A bowl of apples would be brought up from the cellar and perhaps a pan of corn popped and coated with melted butter.

When the family were all home Mama used to make yeast bread twice a week. She liked to mix it at night so she could get it baked off the next forenoon. She made six to eight loaves at a time and there would be quick breads in between. Needless to say, flour was bought by the barrel. The bread had such a delicious smell when it was baking; Mama would cut a loaf of the freshly baked bread so we could have a slice spread with her homemade butter. Many years later a Farm Bureau Leader told us she would not allow her bread to be cut until the next day. Her children surely missed a treat.

INCIDENTS THAT COME TO MIND

Maybasket Time

Maybasket time was a special time for the younger generation. We made the baskets from cardboard boxes and trimmed them with tissue or crepe paper. The lady in the house next beyond us made beautiful baskets with long tissue skirts and paper flowers. A group would get together to hang a basket on a selected person. One of the crowd would walk up slyly, hang the basket on the door knob, give a loud knock and slip away while the rest of us got out of sight. The recipient would have to find and catch whoever they could. Often after some were caught, they would help find and catch the others. Then all would be invited to the house for a little visit. It was the season for the whippoorwill song and croaking frogs and all nature coming alive after the winter.

Memorial Day

On Memorial Day of the year 1908 when the Soldier's Monument was dedicated in the village, all the outlying town schools were brought in to take part in the exercises. The Middle Intervale school pupils rode in a hayrack with the East Bethel school pupils. Hay was put in the bottom of the rack to sit on. There was a parade and the remaining Civil War Veterans rode in a carriage. Each school was asked to be prepared to take some part in the program. Our school did an exercise using dowel wands with red, white, and blue streamers tied at each end.

On Arbor Day we would rake the school yard and sometimes plant a tree. One year we planted two pine trees, one at either corner of the front yard.

An Anecdote

Grace tells me of a little episode mama told her about in later years that happened when Grace was about two years old. Our next door neighbor was having a husking bee and mama went up to help Eve with the supper. Grace spotted a basket of eggs on the floor right next to a mortar and pestle. When discovered she was having fun dropping the eggs into the mortar and breaking them with the pestle. Oh, the chagrin of poor mama when she found what she was doing. She had made such a mess of herself mama had to take her home to change her. Kindly Eve said no harm was done, the hens would lay more eggs. Mama told Grace it seemed she was always getting into things she shouldn't. It sounds quite normal for a two year old, don't you think?

Join the Bethel Historical Society dedicated to preserving and interpreting the local past.

Membership in the Society entitles you to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) free admission to the museum | (5) quarterly newsletter |
| (2) special discounts at museum store | (6) reduced course fees |
| (3) preferred rate for meeting room rental | (7) voting rights in the Society |
| (4) special library and archival privileges | (8) special invitations to Society occasions |

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-----Sustaining \$2.50 (Individual)

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-----Students (under 18 years) \$1.00

-----Life over 55 years \$50.00 single

-----Life over 55 years \$75.00 couple

-----Life under 55 years \$100.00 single

-----Life under 55 years \$150.00 couple

My Most Frightening Memory

I believe without question the most frightening memory of my childhood was of the fire on our road. I cannot pinpoint the year, but it would be in the very early 1900's. It was suspected that a young fellow who had shortly before walked up the road to the house above us, threw down a match or a cigarette. The fire apparently had started at the roadside, and spread into the woods. The neighborhood responded with whatever they had that could be used to fight a fire. My sister Eva stayed with Grace, Robert, and me, while papa, mama, and Wallace went to help. We could only stand outside and watch the smoke and sometimes a blaze. It was a wonderful miracle that through their hard work, they were able to contain the fire. It could so easily have been a great disaster. Our road is a dead end road.

I have always been afraid of fire. It is one of the things our parents impressed upon us - NEVER, NEVER play with matches.

The Bethel Fair

One of my early childhood memories is of going to the Bethel Fair. The fairgrounds were in the area of what is now the Bethel Airport. Mama would pack a picnic basket lunch and we would usually meet up with another neighbor family who had done the same and so eat and visit together.

There was a racetrack, horse and oxen pulling, and animals for show, exhibits of handwork and gardening and all the things that go to make up a fair. There was one man who gave out little tracing and coloring books that we liked; I expect it was an advertisement for something. My favorite thing was the merry-go-round. The tickets were six for twenty-five cents which gave the three of us two rides each. That merry-go-round was not the beautiful horses that glide up and down a brass pole like they do today. I called it rigerity-jig, but I loved it. Many years later when my husband and I took our two small grandsons to Old Orchard Beach, I took them on the merry-go-round and the operator asked me, with a twinkle in his eye, who was having the most fun.

The Bethel Fair was always a fun day for us and is a pleasant memory.

Part III will appear in the next issue of the *Courier*.

The Bethel Historical Society
P.O. Box 12
Bethel, Maine 04217



The Middle Intervale Meeting House

1816

Published quarterly by the Bethel Historical Society, Stanley R. Howe, Editor. Please address all inquiries and suggestions to Editor, Bethel Historical Society Newsletter, Box 12, Bethel, Maine 04217.

IN MEMORIAM

Died, Gwendolyn Stearns, August 12, 1983. Miss Stearns, well-known for her unique sketches on her notes to friends, also contributed a selection of reminiscences published in the 1974 Special Edition of the Bethel Citizen.

Died, John E. Auchmoody, October 8, 1983, life member of the Society.

Died, Dorothy E. Marshall, October 19, 1983, life member of the Society.

NEW LIFE MEMBER

Persis Post, Newry. Long active in the Society as a guide in the museum and organizer of antique shows, Mrs. Post is also a new member of the Board of Trustees.

ANNUAL MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 1

The 18th annual meeting of the Society was held on September 1 with the usual pot luck supper supervised by the Special Projects Committee preceding it.

During the business meeting Treasurer Margaret Joy Tibbetts reported that the Society was in good financial health and that the endowment appeared to have grown steadily since the last annual meeting. The nominating committee reported the same slate of officers for another year with the addition of Persis Post and Ruth Wight as Trustees for three years. Tributes were paid to retiring trustees Edith Eddy and Helen Morton for their long and devoted service to the Society. President Donald Bennett cited some of the highlights of the past year including a membership gain of over fifty persons, highly successful special events, important donations to the Society, numerous grants awarded, special exhibits featured and a record level of giving to the endowment. The president selected the Society's role in the Maine Before Statehood exhibit now touring the state as one of the most exciting developments during 1983.

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